

Belmont Cable Access Committee (CAC)
Minutes 3/18/2003
7:30PM, BCTV Channel 8 Studio

Present

Committee: John Verrilli, Todd Bloniarz, Maryann Scali, Larry Kutner
Comcast: Abiodun Shobowale, Cori Morris

Call to Order

John Verrilli officially called the meeting to order at 7:35.

Review of 2/18/02 Minutes

Minutes were received and approved. No changes needed to be made although topics from the previous meeting were briefly discussed. A BCTV open house is still being considered for sometime in May. The additional microphone added at recent Selectmen's Meetings needs to be moved so as not to block the camera shots of the town officials. The Alphagen bulletin board is back in use after being sent out for repairs and is working adequately. A new adult TV training workshop begins April 7 and 8. John Verrilli spoke to the Belmont Council on Aging director Nava Niv-Vogel regarding public access opportunities for seniors (workshop, regular show, productions).

Issues from the Community/Complaints/Concerns

Maryann inquired about what happened to the ABC Family channel, which had previously aired on AT&T Broadband/Comcast Channel 66 (that channel has since been deleted from our cable system). ABC Family was moved to Ch. 26, with the shopping channel previously occupying that slot moving up to Ch. 28. Maryann pointed out that no notification was made by Comcast that any stations had been moved or deleted from the town's service.

Report on Studio Operations

Abiodun reported that overall everything is running ok but long-term he feels the impetus is to obtain newer and upgraded equipment. With the possibility of war looming, Cori also added that Alphagen software is installed at the Belmont Police Department allowing them to access the Ch. 8 bulletin board remotely in the event of a town emergency so they can display appropriate notices to the town.

Public Meetings Coverage

Although several upcoming meetings amongst the Warrant Committee and Planning Boards were suggested for coverage by Ch. 8, a larger issue was presented by all in attendance regarding the required job of Ch. 8's access coordinators. Should they be required to shoot video at all meetings or could it be left up to volunteers to help with coverage of non-Selectmen/School Committee meetings? Cori pointed out that it's not necessarily the role of the access coordinator to cover all meetings; their job is to train and supervise volunteers.

Review of Finances and Capital Equipment

Finances were assumed to be accurate as discussed at the previous meeting on 2/18. Maryann suggested the purchase of a long table for the studio which among other uses would come in handy for monthly CAC meetings. Cori agreed to order one. Larry Kutner spoke about looking to overhaul the current studio's equipment, and that a general change in attitude about people's perception of the studio is necessary to generate volunteer interest. Larry stressed that Ch. 8 needs to offer potential volunteers access to equipment that they don't have at home. This can be accomplished through technology (such as replacing field gear and installing non-linear editing suites), experiences (giving volunteers access to opportunities they normally wouldn't have at home), and education (offering advanced training workshops to volunteers as well as Ch. 8 staff). In regards to upgrading studio equipment, Larry pointed out that industrial equipment is less expensive than broadcast level; he also suggested a couple different brands of digital DVCAM camcorders, non-linear digital editing services, player recorders, and production software (Video Toaster). Cori wrapped up the topic by recommending Larry speak to Dennis Dutra (an independent consultant/engineer) about overhauling the studio equipment.

Update on Cable Access Corporation/Public Information and Communication Committees

John recently attended a meeting of the Public Information and Communication (PIC) Committee. Topics included the future coverage and improvement of lighting at meetings. Cori mentioned that \$10K was spent on upgrades to the Selectmen's meeting room and no other groups use it. The Planning Board has recently started using it but Cori requested that the School Committee should start using the room for their meetings. John will discuss the matter with the PIC and Selectmen before approaching the School Board.

No action on Cable Access Corporation ad hoc committee. Todd attended a meeting in Arlington about this same topic.

Possible Amendment of Political Guidelines

This topic was not discussed but will likely be brought up at a future meeting. Letters have been sent to candidates for town-wide offices, describing the policy and resources for political messages on BCTV 8.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:40pm.

Next Meeting

Tuesday April 15, 2003, 7:30pm at the studio.

Respectfully submitted,
Todd Bloniarz